

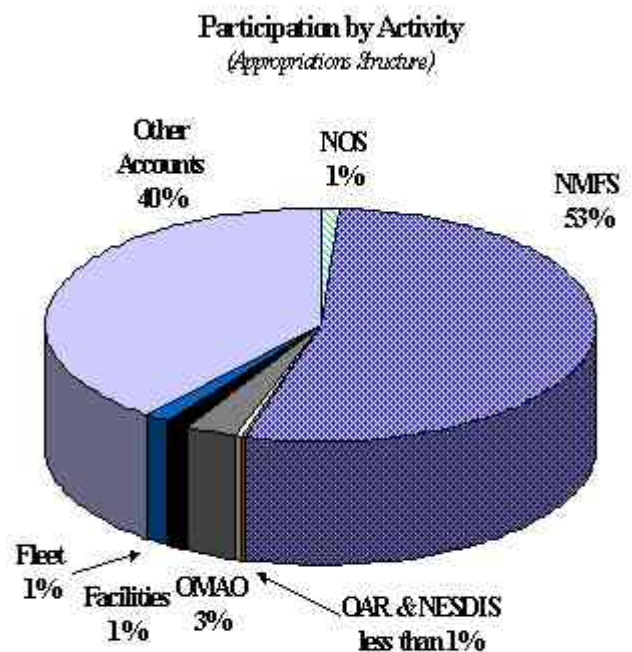


## Recover Protected Species

**Total Request: \$280,664,000**

**Vision** - NOAA's vision is to conserve marine species and to recover those in danger of extinction. By 2005, NOAA will be on the road to recovering every marine species at risk and maintaining the healthy marine ecosystems upon which they depend.

**Challenge** - Marine resources contribute billions of dollars to the Nation's economy. However, many commercial and recreational activities contribute to stress on marine species. Many populations of marine organisms are depleted or declining due to human activity in marine ecosystems and unknown causes. For example, West Coast salmon populations are at-risk due to a combination of factors including habitat loss and commercial overexploitation. Despite protective measures, fishing-related mortality continues to threaten marine turtles in the Nation's waters. Several seal and sea lion populations in Alaska are declining rapidly and the causes are uncertain. Recovery plans have been developed for the most endangered species, but implementation for others, especially for stocks of marine mammals and sea turtles, is needed. The desired outcome is to recover protected species in danger of extinction and to maintain healthy species and ecosystems, in a manner compatible with the sustainable use of marine resources.



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**Implementation Strategy** - The objectives of this goal are to:

- reduce the probability of extinction for protected species; and
- maintain healthy species and ecosystems.

**Benefits** - Through conservation of the Nation's living marine resources, NOAA will enhance economic and cultural opportunities for future generations. The existence of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act and other legislation provides a clear indication of public support for strong efforts to conserve living marine resources. This effort will enable the preservation of marine biodiversity by balancing the utilization of natural resources with the management of protected species. Recovering species, and avoiding the further decline of others, will contribute to the overall health and understanding of marine ecosystems. Improved science will lead to better long-term management and conservation strategies.

### **FY 2000 Accomplishments**

During FY 2000, NOAA continued to improve its stewardship of marine mammals, sea turtles and other marine species, including salmon. NOAA has worked with the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to complete a status assessment for North Atlantic right whales and has also worked to prepare revised estimates of the abundance of dolphin stocks affected by the tuna purse-seine fishery. In order to determine the nesting activities of leatherback turtles, aerial surveys were conducted along the Pacific coast of Mexico.

A recovery plan for endangered fin and sei whales was completed and implemented. In addition, NOAA has worked with its regional offices and other government agencies, such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Coast Guard, to develop policies and regulations that protect endangered or threatened species and their habitat. A final rule reducing the mesh size around Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) was developed by the northeast regional NMFS office for the summer flounder trawl fishery. Harvest management plans and 4(d) rules have been developed and published for several species of salmon. NOAA's Office of Protected Resources has worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to improve the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) guidance. Incidental take permits issued under HCP currently cover over 2 million acres of salmon habitat. With the help of the U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA has implemented a mandatory ship reporting system to prevent ship strikes with endangered northern right whales and has instituted regulations on humpback whale-watching activities in Alaska.

During FY 2000, NOAA evaluated and reported on fisheries impacts to marine mammals. NOAA's Observer Program assessed Cook Inlet beluga mortality incidental to the Cook Inlet salmon driftnet fishery, monitored marine mammal takes by the U.S. Navy during low frequency active sonar systems deployments, evaluated the extent to which subsistence harvest of whales is affecting stock recovery, and determined the level of incidental marine mammal take in California gillnet fisheries. NOAA also completed bycatch estimates for North Atlantic sea turtles and published a paper on mitigation of seabird bycatch in relation to the Hawaii-based swordfish longline fishery.

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NOAA completed several activities to protect and restore priority diversity areas. Marine debris was removed from coral reefs at Lisianski Island, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Creek restoration projects, installation of fish passages and screens on power plants, and the development of analytical recovery models have all been implemented by NOAA to reduce salmonid mortality on the west coast. Species-habitat baseline surveys were conducted in the Tortugas region of Florida to assess the role of coral reef Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in juvenile and adult reef fish abundance.

Other FY 2000 accomplishments for NOAA's RPS strategic planning team include the institutionalization and enforcement of the Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS) program, which has helped to reduce the number and risk of incidental and direct takes of marine mammals, and has enhanced communication and coordination with tribal groups over subsistence harvest of whales. The International Dolphin Conservation Program Act and the Cooperative Agreement component of the Northern Fur Seal Conservation Plan were both implemented in FY 2000. NOAA represented the U.S. position at the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). NOAA also designated critical habitat for numerous stocks of salmon, provided technical assistance to non-federal land managers to develop HCPs, and implemented the Timber/Fish/Wildlife Agreement in Washington. In addition, NOAA reduced the competition between the Alaskan pollock fishery and Stellar sea lions.

### **FY 2002 Key Activities**

The RPS program proposes to restore and sustain the stream of economic, scientific and environmental benefits from the oceans to the American public, as well as other nations. This will be accomplished by focusing on the conservation and recovery of several key marine and anadromous species that serve as indicators of environmental health as well as supporting key economic activities (fisheries and recreation). They are a call for NOAA to act using its scientific and management expertise in cooperation with domestic and international partners.

This initiative focuses NOAA's effort on both the crisis of several species that are on the brink of extinction, and for which we must urgently stem the declines and begin recovery, and on the continued conservation of species that are determined to be at risk or even healthy, but which are threatened by various human activities. The initiative targets species across the marine oceanscape both domestically and internationally. This will be done through a combination of research, monitoring and management actions to determine the causes for the decline and to implement recovery measures.

. Key activities and initiatives include:

### **Conservation and Recovery of Protected Marine Species**

- **Sea turtle conservation and recovery** - Atlantic and Pacific sea turtles are experiencing serious decline and extinction projections within this century. NOAA will gather the information on the

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risks these stocks face from fishing operations and other activities, both domestically and internationally, and mitigate those risks as well as monitor trends in species status. These activities are vital to promote marine turtle recovery and avoid restrictions to economic activities that are impacting them.

- **Bottlenose dolphin conservation and recovery** - NOAA will expand current activities in stock identification and assessment, to reduce mortality incidental to commercial fishing activities, and to initiate efforts to use bottlenose dolphins as an indicator of the health of the ecosystems they occupy.
- **Northern right whales** - NOAA will expand current population, monitoring and health assessments and recovery efforts in the North Atlantic and in the North Pacific.
- **Atlantic Salmon Recovery** - The Gulf of Maine Atlantic salmon was listed as endangered in 2000. Once ranging from the Housatonic River in Connecticut to the Canadian border, naturally spawning populations are now restricted to fewer than 20 streams in mid-coast and Downeast Maine area. NOAA will conserve and restore healthy populations of Atlantic and the habitats upon which they depend to provide a surplus for recreational and native people's fisheries consistent with existing laws.
- **Enforcement of conservation measures for protected resources** - NOAA will support two permanent Protected Resources Enforcement Team to enforce Turtle Excluder Device regulations, to educate shrimpers on the maintenance and use of the devices, and to provide additional related problem solving and intervention strategies to protect sea turtles.
- **Pacific salmon recovery** - Pacific salmonids, which have long been integral to the culture and economy of the Pacific Northwest, have declined dramatically over the past century due to the combined effects of habitat destruction; hydropower operations; poor land-use, transportation and water-resource decisions; harvest and hatchery impacts; increased predators; and poor environmental conditions. NOAA will implement the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund provide support to the broad array of state, tribal, local governments and private entities that are involved in collaborative salmon conservation efforts in this vast area.
- **Marine Protected Areas Program** - NOAA will strengthen and improve agency-wide Marine Protected Areas (MPA) programs and their conservation goals. NOAA will foster collaboration with the Department of Interior and other Federal agencies, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments as well as non-governmental partners.

### Key Performance Measures

	1997 act.	1998 act.	1999 act.	2000 act.	2001 est.	2002 est.
By FY 2006, reduce the probability of extinction of 5 threatened species <sup>1</sup> /ESUs out of 23 threatened species/ESUs: (annual)	na	na	na	na	2	2
By FY 2006, reduce the probability of extinction of 7 candidate species <sup>1</sup> /ESUs out of 23 candidate species/ESUs: (annual)	na	na	na	na	1	2
By FY 2006 mortality of strategic marine mammal stocks incidental to commercial fishing operations in six fisheries will be at insignificant levels (cumulative)	na	na	na	na	2	6
# recovery plans developed (cum)	10	20	24	27	27	29
# recovery plan priority activities implemented (annual)	8	8	15	20	22	25
# species with population status improved (annual)	12	23	15	16	17	20
# status reviews used to establish and evaluate conservation programs (annual)	11	18	11	13	15	17
# investigation on mortality of protected species (annual)	7	10	10	15	16	20
# cooperative conservation programs implemented (cum)	4	10	10	10	10	10

The RPS budget proposal is based in part on measuring our ability to reduce the probability of extinction for at risk-species. RPS performance will be measured by the results of our attempts to reduce the risk of extinction for protected species from detrimental human activities, e.g., reducing incidental and direct takes, increasing species habitat, decreasing negative interactions, and mitigating natural phenomena.

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